United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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October 15, 1994

Honorable Lois D. Cashell
Secretary
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
825 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20426

Dear Ms. Cashell:

The attached document entitled "Elements of Consensus on American Shad Management in the Stretch of Savannah River Between Strom Thurmond (Clarks Hill) Dam and Augusta" presents background and details of a preliminary management plan addressing restoration of access to historical anadromous fish spawning habitat in the Savannah River, South Carolina and Georgia.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service hereby submits this document under Section 10(a)(2)(a) of the Federal Power Act for your information and use.

Sincerely yours,

Roger L. Banks
Field Supervisor

RB/SG

Attachment.

ELEMENTS OF CONSENSUS ON AMERICAN SHAD MANAGEMENT IN THE STRETCH OF SAVANNAH RIVER BETWEEN STROM THURMOND (CLARKS HILL) DAM AND AUGUSTA

On June 11, 1992 an interagency meeting was held to ascertain those elements of the Fish and Wildlife Service Goals for Savannah River anadromous fish (especially American Shad) management which were held in common by all area resource agencies. The area resource agencies in attendance included the US Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS), Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), and South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources (SCWMRD). The US Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was invited to attend to acquaint the State fisheries agencies with the special efforts of the Georgia Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council. The soil conservation agent acts as the RC&D coordinator for the 14 county council.

The position of the F&WS is that habitat expansion and enhancement of the stretch of the Savannah River between Strom Thurmond (Clarks Hill) Dam and New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam (NSBLD) to anadromous species spawning use would be beneficial to the stocks of those fishes, especially American shad.

American shad are known to have had historical Savannah River spawning migrations of over 385 miles. The first major dam built on the Savannah River, the Augusta Diversion Dam, was constructed in 1845 at then approximate river mile 285. In about 1938 the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) constructed the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam at what was then approximate river mile 265. Subsequent COE projects cut valuable meanders from the lower river to shorten the river channel by approximately 78 miles, so that NSBLD is now located at river mile 187.3. Nearly half of the Savannah River spawning habitat once available to anadromous fishes has been lost. Restoring use of as much river as is possible is desirable for nationally important fish species.

Construction of fish ladders, with concomitant expansion of suitable spawning and nursery areas, has increased run sizes of American shad in selected northeast rivers. American shad have already responded positively to passage into the NSBLD pool. There is no reason to believe that successful utilization of habitats further upstream could not also be obtained. The current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's relicensing of both the Augusta Diversion Dam and Stevens Creek projects presents a unique temporal window of opportunity to provide American shad passage above these facilities through prescriptive authorities delegated to the Secretaries of Interior and Commerce by Section 18 of the Federal Power Act.

Five elements of F&WS goals for this area were identified. They involve (1) the continued lockage of American shad at New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam, (2) the design and implementation of the upstream fish passage mechanism at the Augusta Diversion Dam and at the (3) Stevens Creek Dam, (4) improvement of poor dissolved oxygen, and (5) safe downstream passage mechanism for outmigrant anadromous fishes if deemed necessary.

Three areas of consensus were initially identified by the interagency group.

1. The group agreed that continued lockage of American shad to the NSBLD pool is desirable.

2. The group agreed that dam discharge water quality parameters, including dissolved oxygen levels, should at least meet each State's minimum quality criteria. Thus, the low DO late summer discharges of Strom Thurmond Dam need upgrading.

3. It was agreed by the group that it would be beneficial to evaluate American shad population responses, possibly as monitored by commercial and recreational harvest, to the passage provided. It was further agreed that the means for such evaluation would best be determined by an interagency committee. This committee would design a study plan and meet periodically to evaluate the data generated by the identified work plan. Monies required to pursue this effort would be jointly sought and delegated to cooperators engaged in the actual field work, as arranged for by the committee.

   American shad commercial harvest rate catch per unit effort (CPUE) data has been compiled by SCWMRD for some 12 years. The group agreed that although this data has several weaknesses, it is a very valuable data base and its collection should continue to possibly show long term trends. Sources of new monies to continue the compilation of this data is desirable and should be encouraged by the interagency committee.

Formation of the Savannah River Anadromous Fish Interagency Committee (SRAFIC) then is the immediate first need to further action on the consensus items.